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PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS

A DEFENSE OF DUALISTIC REALISM¹

THE dualistic view which I shall try to defend maintains that consciousness and the world of physical objects in space are essentially different from each other in kind; and that the psychical may be defined as consisting of non-physical entities which, though they may be spatial, are not in space, and which exist only as functions of one or more individual persons or organisms. This view is so simple and so commonly held that it needs little elucidation. It involves two factors, namely, an empirical view of the make-up of consciousness, and the double thesis that there is a real, three-dimensional space, common to different minds, and that consciousness is not in this space, but is only and always the function of persons or organisms. I make no claim to any intuitive knowledge that consciousness is not in space. I maintain merely that the complex facts of human experience, which no one does or can deny, are such that the dualistic hypothesis is by far the simplest and most natural. No other theory, as it seems to me, can explain so easily the various characteristics of knowledge, perception, illusion, and error. This is a subject to which I shall return later on in this paper.

By the other factor of the dualist theory to which I referred above—its empirical view of the make-up of consciousness—I mean merely the fact that dualism has no *a priori* theory of the nature of the psychical, but takes consciousness to be whatever it finds it. Thus it does not feel bound to defend any theory of the self nor to maintain the existence of a conscious stuff or consciousness-in-general. Consciousness for it is what introspective psychology shall find it to be. In other words, it is to be identified with what is commonly known as conscious *content*. Part of this content is peculiarly subjective, part of it is comparatively objective in nature. It has both secondary and primary qualities. Most of it, perhaps, has no spatial characteristics, but some of it—notably visual and tactual percepts—is obviously spatial. And to the dualist this empirical observation is in

¹ Read at the meeting of the American Philosophical Association in New York, December, 1916.

no way inconsistent with the thesis that consciousness—even spatial consciousness—is not *in* the common Euclidian space of the physical world. That this should seem to some a difficult conception is due merely to the fact that one seldom hears it expressed. Few people will find it hard to conceive of an olfactory sensation or a mental concept of a triangle as being extra spatial; and the dualist merely points out that there is really no more difficulty in supposing the percept of a triangle to be out of space—*i. e.*, out of the objective space of the physical world—than in accepting the same characteristic of the concept or of the odor.

But although the dualist insists that our knowledge of the physical world is mediate, he is very far from considering it unreal. He is by no means an advocate of agnosticism or mystery. The situation is simply this: Each one of us finds himself the center of a flux of experiences, varying in impermanence and durability, some of them seemingly caused by one's own efforts, most of them seemingly forced upon one from the not-self. Each of us, moreover, believes that there are many other centers of experience like himself, and proceeds to communicate with these other centers or selves. How are these various facts to be put together? Several hypotheses are possible here as in most cases where we attempt to give a scientific ordering to a mass of experienced facts. Just as the facts of the starry heavens may be ordered by means either of the Copernican or the Ptolomaic hypothesis, so the facts of my experience as a whole may conceivably be accounted for by a realistic, idealistic, or even a solipsistic epistemology. As is the case in the other sciences, if a given theory can not be made to account for all the facts it must be laid aside, while the choice between the remaining hypotheses must be based on simplicity, ease, naturalness. Now the dualist does not claim that his view is the only thinkable one or the only one that can be made consistent with admitted facts; he insists merely that it is the most natural and by far the simplest way of ordering our experience.

A very strange and interesting criticism upon dualism, frequently heard from idealists and pan-objectivists alike, is that it seeks to crowd all the rich variety of this world into only two categories. I have called this criticism strange and interesting because of its source—coming as it does from those who would crowd all the rich variety of this world into one category. Now the dualist, as I understand him, is no worshiper of abstract duality. He has never for a moment doubted that this world is full of a number of things. And not only can he find room within his physical and mental realms for all the different kinds of reality that the physical and mental sciences can discover: he is willing to grant the new logicians a separate sphere for their concepts and orders, and he has no veto for those

who would propose additional spheres of reality. All that he is interested in is the preservation of the sharp distinction between the mental and the physical. On the question whether or not there are other distinctions in the universe of being equally sharp he is not called upon to take sides.

The remaining criticisms of dualism commonly met with may, perhaps, be summed up under two related heads: (1) dualism involves transcendence; (2) it shuts the mind up to its "ideas" and thus makes knowledge only inferential and mediate. In a recent paper² I tried to show that our "ideas," far from forming our prison-house, are in fact our means of knowing the outer world. We do not see our percepts or know our ideas; we see and know by means of them. To seek to free us from them is in effect a demand that we shall perceive without perceptions and think without thoughts. It must, of course, be admitted that the dualistic view does involve both transcendence and inferential knowledge. But it must also be remembered that every other form of epistemology which would avoid solipsism has to make use of both these things. For my knowledge of your thought, in whatever epistemological view one may select, is surely neither immanent nor immediate. Nor can it be successfully maintained—though the attempt is often made—that on the dualistic view the mental and the physical can never affect each other in any way. For the question at once presents itself: Why can they not? Why should the fact of their difference prevent their mutual influence and interaction? To argue that only like can act upon like is an astonishing piece of dogmatic rationalism, and strikingly suggests the fifth century, B. C. Whether or not two things as unlike as the dualistic mind and body can act upon each other is exactly a question for experience to decide. And if we go to experience with no preconceived theory to defend, we shall, to say the least, find nothing to refute the dualistic hypothesis. The case for dualism would therefore seem, on the surface, rather good; and especially so when we remember that it has been the doctrine of the majority of philosophers through all the history of thought, and that it is to-day the starting-point of nearly all scientists. Pretty plainly, therefore, the burden of proof would seem to rest not upon it, but upon its opponents.

Since the dualist seeks to define the psychical by means of its anthesis to the physical, it seems necessary to say a word first of all in defense of the independent existence of the physical. That word, however, must be very brief; and in fact I shall merely outline the method of defense which, in my opinion, the dualist should attempt against the attacks of idealism. The idealistic argument against the

² "The Confessions of an Old Realist," this JOURNAL, Vol. XIII, p. 687.

independent reality of the physical, as I understand it, might be reduced to two main contentions: (1) That such a reality is unthinkable; (2) that even were it thinkable and real, it would be separated from us by a chasm, and that hence knowledge of it would be impossible. In answer to the first of these assertions, the dualist might very well maintain that there is nothing unthinkable in the real existence of an objective, three-dimensional space possessing the characteristics described by Euclid, and that once this is granted, the existence of unconscious, unperceived physical objects occupying that space is perfectly conceivable. In answer to the idealist's second objection, the dualist may reply that there is no reason why such a physical world should not affect our minds in such a way as to make inferential and mediate, but real knowledge perfectly possible; and as for the chasm, it is really no greater for the dualist than it is for every idealist who will not consent to be a solipsist. This criticism, of course, applies chiefly to the various extensions of subjectivism, such as the Berkeleyan and Roycean, rather than to objective idealism. As to the latter I can only wonder whether it really differs from realism in anything but name. In name, indeed, the two are removed from each other as the east is from the west. But the far east becomes the far west if you go far enough; and the "experience" of objective idealism, on close examination, has an uncanny likeness to the "neutral entities" of the new realism. The world of the objective idealist is really the world of Holt and Perry all over again, only with a different set of labels. And why it should be worth anyone's while to contend so stoutly over a label is one of the mysteries to which the dualist has no clue.

I am inclined to think that the idealist's attack is by far the most dangerous that the dualist has to meet. Yet as our discussion centers chiefly about the psychical, most of my time will have to be spent in dealing with the views of those who would interpret the psychical in terms of the physical, or transform both into a psychophysical continuum. This latter, as we all know, is the attempt of Professor Hollingworth. And as his position is one of the few that has not been already thoroughly examined by defenders of dualism, I shall devote to it more of my precious twenty minutes than I can perhaps rightly afford. Basing his conclusions in large part upon laboratory observations, Professor Hollingworth maintains that "feeling," "judging," "believing," and "perceiving" do not differ qualitatively, but, as he puts it, "statistically." "They are distinguished from each other only by the universality of their verdicts." And the qualitative similarity here found he extends to all the "various types of experience." Those experiences which are "statistically common" he calls physical, while those that vary greatly or appear but rarely are for him the

psychical; and thus he constructs a "psychophysical continuum," with no break in it, connecting the most subjective with the most objective and "external" phenomena. The only difference between the so-called mental and the so-called physical is thus one of relative regularity; and dualism is therefore demolished. My exposition is, of course, too brief to be even fair, but I take it for granted that every one who hears my paper will have read Professor Hollingworth's. Without further attempt at exposition, therefore, I wish to point out an interesting fact concerning Professor Hollingworth's argument. The phenomena which he has shown to be connected by the continuum all lie within what the dualist calls the mental. Take, *e. g.*, his test case of feeling, judging, believing, and perceiving. All these are what the dualist calls mental processes. And the same thing holds of those objects or psychical contents which Professor Hollingworth has succeeded in putting into his continuum. Now plainly this is no refutation of dualism; in fact it does not even touch the question whether, besides the psychical continuum, there be a physical world, separated from the psychical by a real chasm.

I must, of course, add at once that Professor Hollingworth will insist that he has shown his continuum to be really psychophysical. His reasons for thinking that he has done so seem to be two. In the first place he confuses—or rather he purposely identifies—the objective with the physical—quite in the manner of several of the English new realists. Now it must be remembered that in the dualistic view, the "psychical" itself contains both relatively subjective and relatively objective phenomena, mental processes of various sorts belonging to the former, while perceptual images are examples of the latter. Hence to point out the fact that there is a continuum between the two is not to refute the dualist; and to connect up the psychical with the physical by the legerdemain of arbitrarily *defining* the physical as the objective is to win a purely verbal victory. And what I say here of Professor Hollingworth would apply equally well to Professor Alexander and Mr. Moore. If all you mean by the physical is the objective part of your conscious experience, then doubtless the "physical" is continuous with the rest of your conscious life. But this fact, though psychologically interesting, is quite irrelevant to the debate between monism and dualism—unless, indeed, it be taken as a surrender to Bishop Berkeley.

The other reason why Professor Hollingworth thinks he has got the physical into the same continuum with the psychical is because he insists upon being studiously unaware of the fact that his opponent has ever suggested a distinction between a thought or a perceptual, memory, or imagination image, on the one hand, and its object, on the other. One may perhaps hold that this distinction is un-

tenable, but surely one can not prove it such by failing to consider the question. You can't refute your opponent's main contention by ignoring it. In short, so far as I can see, Professor Hollingworth has proved only a psychical continuum, and the chasm between the psychical and the physical is still unbridged.

In the brief time that is left me I can do no more than *remind* you of some of the principal reasons which prevent the dualist from accepting any form of epistemological monism. And it is obvious enough that what I shall have time to say can hardly be regarded as even an exhaustive *summary* of these reasons. The first of these to which I shall call your attention is the impossibility, as the dualist views it, of regarding emotions, volitions, meanings, and even memory and imagination images, as anything else than subjective. One seeks in vain for the physical object which is numerically identical with my memory of last winter's icicles, or with Lewis Carroll's imagined Jaberwock. Nor do I see that it helps things out in the least to propose a distinction between existence and subsistence. For this distinction itself splits the world into two very separate parts; and since the new realist will hardly deny that something real happens when a subsistent object which had been merely a possible object of thought becomes an "existent" object in space and time, he will (as it seems to me) be forced to acknowledge the reality of the dualism for which the dualist is contending—the dualism, namely, between the thought or image of an object which is not in space, and a physical object actually in space. The change of terminology may have *disguised* the situation; it has not altered it.

What shall be done, moreover, with the other things named above—emotions, meanings, volitions; and what, as Professor Strong has asked, shall we say of clearness? That surely is a subjective quality of percepts. To identify emotions with physiological processes, and volitions with mathematical formulæ descriptive of movements, is a course which, indeed, is boldly taken by some pan-objectivists, but one in which I fancy not many will care to follow them.

Some of the new realists, to be sure, and notably Professor Perry, by no means go so far as to deny the subjective. Values in particular are for these thinkers admittedly subjective in nature. But while I heartily agree with Professor Perry in this position, I can not understand how he can make this view consistent with pan-objectivism. If, when values arise, something comes into existence which can not be catalogued as a physical object nor a logical concept nor as any kind of neutral entity, but only as something which is absolutely dependent on consciousness and essentially subjective, then have you not already on your hands a very real dualism?

Another difficulty which the dualist feels whenever he attempts to

identify the psychical with the physical is to be found in what seems to me the indubitable fact that the content of mind is peculiarly private. In the words of Professor James, the breaches between "thoughts belonging to different personal minds . . . are the most absolute breaches in nature. . . ."³ Now the significance of this view is plain. All realists, whether new or old, agree that the physical world is in some sense common to all. But if it be true that the content of mind is not common, but private and subjective, we have here evidence for dualism which it would be hard to get around. Several of the new realists have seen this danger and have consequently denied the peculiar privacy of mind. Thus Professor Perry insists that you may know the content of my mind as really as you may know the content of my purse; and that while it is true that I may conceal one of them from you, I may be equally successful in concealing the other. I have, of course, peculiarly good access to my own mind, but I may perfectly well tell you what is in my mind, or in some other way you may find it out; and when this has happened you know what is in my mind quite as well as I do.

Now all good dualists, I imagine, would be perfectly willing to admit that under certain favorable circumstances you can know what is in my mind. But frankly I fail to see the bearing of this fact upon the question of the private and subjective nature of mental content. That Professor Perry regards his argument as relevant I can explain only on the hypothesis that for the moment he has lost from sight the universally accepted distinction between the two uses of the word knowledge, namely, direct and immediate experience and what Professor James calls "knowledge about." Professor Perry has shown plainly that I can have *knowledge about* your mental content. But the realist will ask, What of it? The kind of knowledge that you can *not* have of my mind is the *immediate experience* sort. I may describe my emotion to you, just as I may show you the content of my purse, and thus you may come to have a true idea of my experience. But your idea *is not* my emotion. I can not give you my emotion as I can hand you my money. Thus in a very real sense the content of my mind *is* private and subjective, in a way the content of my purse is not. Or, to take the comparison from another point of view, the description of my emotion, which you may indeed get, *is not* the emotion, any more than a description of my money *is* the hard cash. When I describe my headache to the doctor I do not give him my headache. And I dwell upon this distinction between the two kinds of knowledge because it is only the immediate-experience sort which is relevant to the discussion between monism and dualism. The fact, therefore, that I can tell you *about* my mental content would seem to be highly irrelevant.

³ *Psychology*, p. 153.

A closely related feature of the situation which appeals to the dualist as extremely significant is to be found in the innumerable different images which may be derived from one physical object, whether by different observers at the same time or by the same observer at different times. This is, of course, a very old and obvious objection to any kind of epistemological monism, yet I can not but feel that all the attempted answers to it have somehow missed the real point. If it be true (and surely no one will deny it) that there may be a large number of different images of the same object, it is hard to see how they can all be *identically it*. For this is plainly not a case of an identical element being found in two groups; in many cases it is easy to show that the various images constitute *different elements*. Take, for example, the images that you and I get from this sheet of paper; or the image which I get from a house when I am twenty feet from it and my image of it when at a distance of a mile. The two images differ from each other so considerably, even if we confine our attention to size alone, that it is manifestly impossible to identify them with each other. How then can we identify both with the house? Now it will not do to take refuge in the laws of perspective and identify the two images with the light waves at the two points in question. For the epistemological monist has identified my two images with the *house*. And if the house is to be identified with all the influences and relations that stream out from it, we shall have exploded our house and strewn it to the extremes of the material universe; and we shall also have exploded our theory of so-called "direct perception."

The difficulty just discussed is closely allied to the question raised by the physical and physiological facts of perception. If it be true, as both the new realism and the old maintain, that there are independent objects in the real space with qualities of their own, and if it be true, as physiological psychology teaches, that our percepts of these objects are mediated first by a series of physical processes in the space between the objects and our organisms, and secondly, by a series of physiological processes within our organisms, it is extremely difficult to see how the perceptual fact at the end of the series can *be* the physical object in external space which started the process going.

The well-known difficulty in regard to time is a corollary of this physiological question. The physical and physiological processes involved in perception require time. Hence an appreciable amount of time must pass between the motion which I perceive and the rise of my perception. During that interval the action which I witness has been completed and the object which performed the action may have ceased to exist. How then can the past and possibly non-existent event be numerically identified with my present perception of it?

How can the object which no longer exists *be* my undeniably present and actual perception? I can understand (thanks to the reiterations of my new realist friends) how a given object A can be in two groups. I can not as yet comprehend how an existent object can be numerically identical with one that no longer exists.

This last sentence expresses the essence of the argument which the dualist finds in the facts of error and illusion. And he is therefore astonished when he meets with attempts on the part of pan-objectivists to fit these recalcitrant facts into their system by means of long and elaborate explanations of the physical and physiological *causes* of these errors. Doubtless the double image which one gets by pressing one eye-ball is to be accounted for on strictly physical lines; yet that does not make it the less true that there is admittedly but one object and that there are demonstrably two images, and that the two images can not *be* identically the one object. One may, of course, take refuge in the assertion that the two images are to be identified with the light waves *from* the object or with the resulting brain processes; but quite aside from the very dubious nature of such an identification—an identification which in the end will prove to be utterly meaningless—it is plain that to have recourse to this position is to abandon the central thesis of the new realism, namely, the identification of the common object in the common space with the individual's percept of it.

Be it noted now, in conclusion, how all these difficulties, as yet certainly quite unsurmounted by pan-objectivism, vanish at once if we take the simple and natural position of dualism. To insist that dualism can not be accepted because inferential knowledge and transcendence seem a bit hard to understand, and then to adopt in its place a theory so bristling with irreconcilable characteristics as I think I have shown pan-objectivism to be, would suggest forcibly the interesting performance of straining at the gnat and swallowing the camel. To me, at least, this newer view which I have been criticizing seems quite as uncalled for and gratuitous as it is unquestionably ingenious and original.

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THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE MENTAL AND THE PHYSICAL¹

THE following considerations can make no claim as a contribution to a baffling subject. My philosophic studies have been somewhat restricted to the logic of mathematical physics and applied ethics, and on epistemologic problems I can speak only with an inno-

¹ Read before the American Philosophical Association, December 27, 1916.